

Is It OK for Beyoncé to Sell Soda?

The superstar is being heavily criticized for her new endorsement deal. **Why is everyone freaking out?** By Justin O'Neill

A lot of people are mad at Beyoncé right now. It's not that they didn't love her last album or that they think the "Countdown" video isn't totally awesome. People are furious because she is trying to get you to buy soda.

Beyoncé has entered a partnership with soda giant Pepsi, starring in Pepsi ads and commercials around the world. Her face is even being printed on soda cans. Pepsi is forking over a whopping \$50 million for the campaign.

Celebrity **endorsements** are very common. But in the case of Beyoncé's Pepsi deal, some people are saying the famous singer has made a big mistake.

A Big Paycheck

For decades, companies have been turning to the biggest stars of the day to help sell products. In the 1930s, comedians appeared in radio ads for everything from toothpaste to Jell-O. In the 1980s, NBA superstar Michael Jordan became the face of Nike—helping



million annually. But celebrities benefit too, of course. They get more publicity and, often, a big paycheck. (Not that Beyoncé needs the cash. She and her husband, rapper Jay-Z, are worth about \$775 million.)

Terrible for You

So what's the big deal with Beyoncé's Pepsi deal?

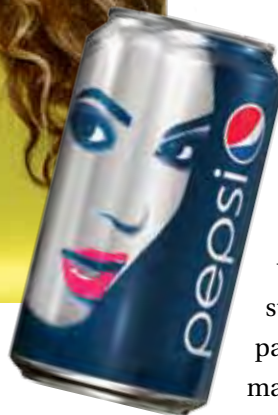
Well, critics say there is a big difference between selling shoes and selling soda. According to health experts, sugary beverages, particularly soda, are making Americans sick. These drinks have

been linked to weight gain and obesity, which can lead to life-threatening conditions like type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

In fact, the soda problem has become so bad that many schools are forbidding it. In New York City, there is even a law that bans the sale of sodas larger than 16 ounces in certain restaurants and stores.

it earn record profits. The "Got Milk?" magazine ads, which have featured everyone from Britney Spears to Kermit the Frog, became **iconic** in the 1990s—getting hired for one of these ads was a sign that a celebrity had "made it."

Today, celebrities appear in 1 out of every 10 advertisements. A 2011 Harvard study found that attaching a celebrity to a product boosts sales an average of \$10



The Power to Influence

Beyoncé's critics are wondering why she would endorse something everyone agrees is unhealthy. It's especially perplexing since she has been a major supporter of First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move!" program, which promotes exercise and a healthy diet for kids.

Kids are especially influenced by celebrity ads, says Shara Drew of the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood. They are more likely to want a product if someone famous they admire endorses it.

Given celebrities' power to influence young people, shouldn't stars like Beyoncé be more careful about the products they represent? Drew thinks so. "This may have been the right financial decision for Beyoncé," she says, "but it certainly wasn't the **ethical** one."

Your Choice

But is it fair to judge Beyoncé for pitching a product that millions of Americans love? Nearly half of all Americans drink soda every day. Besides, it's not like she's telling you to guzzle the stuff 24/7. Nor is she the only soda **spokesperson**. LeBron James, David Beckham, and the band One Direction have all appeared in soda advertisements recently.

Ultimately, no matter how many ads you see, or which famous people appear in them, it's up to you to make responsible choices about what you eat and drink.

Are you going to let some pop star tell you what to do? ●

What Do You Think?

Do you think it's OK for Beyoncé to promote soda? Use evidence from the article to support each side of this debate. Write the information on the lines below.



YES

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

1 Celebrity
endorsements are
a normal part of
show business.

2 _____

3 _____

NO

SHE SHOULD KNOW BETTER.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

EXAMINE POINTS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE DEBATE—AS WELL AS YOUR OWN BELIEFS

—and decide whether it's OK for Beyoncé to promote soda. State your opinion in one sentence below. This can become the thesis statement for an argument essay on this topic.

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